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LEONARD HERMAN STERN.

ADDRESSES

DELIVERED AT THE

East London Synagogue,

STEPNEY,

BY

DR. H. J. SPENSER,

Head Master of the University College School,

AND THE

REV. A. A. GREEN,

Minister of the Hampstead Synagogue,

AT THE

UNVEILING OF THE TABLET

Erected to the Memory

OF THE LATE

LEONARD HERMAN STERN.

B.A (CANTAB.),

2nd Lieut., 13th Battalion (Princess Louise's Kensington)
London Regiment,

ON

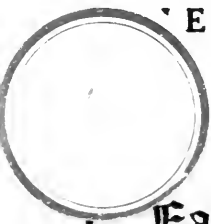
SUNDAY, IYAR 25th, 5676—MAY 28th, 1916.



LONDON:

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EAST LONDON SYNAGOGUE,
RECTORY SQUARE,
STEPNEY GREEN, E.

*With the Rev. J. F. Stern's
Compliments.*



לזכרון בהיכל ה'
 לאיש חיל ואמץ לב הבחור היקר והנעים
 נפתלי יהודה בן החבר ר' יוסף שטערן
 ברוך מבית ה' נתן אמרי שפר ודרש טוב לבני עמו
 נפל במלחמה על מרומי שדה לכבוד ארצו ואמונתו
 יום כה אייר שנת ה'תר"לז לפק
 ת"ג צ"ב ה'

TO THE MEMORY OF
LEONARD HERMAN STERN,
 B.A. CANTAB. SCHOLAR OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE,
 2ND LIEUT. 13TH BATT. (PRINCESS ALICE'S) LONDON REGIMENT,
 BORN AT SYNAGOGUE HOUSE STEPNEY SEPTEMBER 12TH 1891,
 KILLED IN ACTION IN FLANDERS MAY 9TH 1916.
 A WORTHY SON OF THE SANCTUARY.
 TRUE TO FAITH AND COUNTRY.
 WHEREWITH SHALL A YOUNG MAN KEEP HIS WAY PURE?
 BY TAKING HEED THERETO ACCORDING TO THE WORD.
 PSALM CXX. 9.

ADDRESS

BY

Dr. H. J. SPENSER

ON

Unveiling the Memorial Tablet

IN THE

HALL OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

WARDEN AND FELLOW-WORSHIPPERS.

To the glory of the God of his Fathers, to the honour of his Faith, of his Parents, of his University, of his College, and of his School, I have unveiled this beautiful tablet in memory of LEONARD HERMAN STERN.

Even as Samuel of old "took a stone, and set it between Mizpeth and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer," — that is, the stone of help — "saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (I. Sam., vii. 12), — to us and to those who shall come after us this marble record should give help and inspiration.

More than 2,000 years ago Pericles told the Athenians that "of famous men the whole earth is the sepulchre: their story is not graven only on stone over their native earth, but lives on far away, without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of other men's lives." So to-day the truest and worthiest memorial of Leonard Stern is the memory of him which we cherish in our hearts and minds.

The School of which I have the honour to be Head remembers Leonard with thankfulness and pride : in this ceremony to-day I have a personal pride and a personal sorrow, because I enjoyed his friendship, confidence, and affection. As I speak, countless memories crowd in upon me—memories of the class-room, of the playing-fields, of the school camps, of Cambridge, and of our last meeting before he left England. My pride in him and my grief at his loss are shared by all who knew him.

Whence came this magnetic hold which Leonard established on our hearts ? The secret was not merely that of personal charm, great as that charm was : it was not his power of sympathy, his modesty, his ability, his versatility, his humour, or his absolute unselfishness—great, and unsurpassed in my experience of boys and young men ; it was not any one or all of these—it was his essential *goodness*. Of Leonard it might have been written that “ the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob ” (Gen. xlix. 24). His religion was the deep and strong foundation on which was built the goodly edifice of his life.

Writing to Mrs. Brookfield, after visiting the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral, with its charming harmonious powerful combination of arches an

shafts, beautiful whichever way you see them, developed like a fine music, Thackeray says : “ I thought how some people's towering intellects and splendid cultivated geniuses rise upon simple, beautiful foundations hidden out of sight.”

In all the essentials on which the great religions are agreed Leonard Stern was a leader in the world of youth ; that he was a “ leader in Israel ” we know ; in the world he never forgot that he was a leader *from* Israel. And I, a Gentile and a Christian, charge the young amongst you, in God's name, never to abandon your grasp of the things unseen, that sheet anchor of your Faith, which shall hold you in the blackest night of storm—that Faith which should be to you, as it was to Leonard Stern, the guiding principle of your lives. So long as that Faith can rear and inspire such men as Leonard Stern, and many others whom you and I know, that Faith is wisdom—justified of her children. Attempts to seduce you from it, I, personally, regard as misguided and impertinent !

In a passage exquisite in form and feeling Walter Savage Landor has lamented the instability of human gratitude and remembrance. Says the old slave, Æsop, to Rhodope, “ There are no fields of amaranth on this side of the

grave ; there are no voices, O Rhodope, that are not soon mute, however tuneful ; there is no name, with whatever emphasis of passionate love repeated, of which the echo is not faint at the last." And though this be true, and though in the nature of things it must continue to be true of these earthly tabernacles of ours, yet we can rejoice to-day in the communion of saints.

" There is one great society alone on earth, the noble Living and the noble Dead," and amongst those who have passed this bourne, we believe that Leonard has his place :

" A just and faithful knight of God."

SERMON

BY THE

Rev. A. A. GREEN

AT THE

Memorial Service

IN THE SYNAGOGUE.

חֶזֶק וְנִתְחַזֵּק בְּעַד זְמַנּוֹ וּבְעַד צָרֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ
וַיְהִי וַיַּעַשׂה הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינָיו :

"Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good."—II. SAMUEL X. 12.

THESE is perhaps hardly a line in the pages of Scripture which so appeals to our present mood and our present need as this fine call to his fighting men of that brave old Bible soldier, Joab, the leader of King David's Army, on the eve of a great and decisive national struggle. "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good."

Unconsciously, perhaps, but with supreme effectiveness, Joab, in this brief sentence, summed up completely the resultant of all the many and complex forces, mental and moral, that must animate clear-thinking and right-feeling men who find themselves confronted in a deliberate

act of War with the equal and awful responsibility of taking the lives of others and of offering the sacrifice of their own. "For our people and for the cities of our God"—it is the only justification for the cruelty of War. "And the Lord do that which seemeth Him good"—this is the comfort of the man who lays down his life for his people; this is the explanation and the consolation for those whom he leaves behind him. Although the whole of Joab's brief battle-call was addressed to the ranks of the soldiers who followed him, it yet seems to reach with equal direct application to those for whom such a fight is being made, to the parents, to the wives, to the sisters and brothers and to the friends of the brave men who are standing up for the honour of their nation and for the safety of their people.

We also are asked to be of good courage, we also are asked to play the men, we also are asked to say with unwavering fortitude and with unfaltering faith, "and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good." It is in this spirit that we are assembled here now in this beautiful and uplifting service of prayer which links us so sacredly to the memory of Leonard Herman Stern, the finest type of modern representatives of his great and ancient race, the

splendid example of the best in Great Britain's great spirits, highly endowed with intellectual graces, still more highly gifted with the nobler grace of moral strength and spiritual aspiration, honoured and admired by us all and, by those of us privileged to know him well, very dearly loved. A year ago, in the first days of the anguish of bereavement we were aroused from our benumbed sense of affliction by an address from this pulpit which for some of us will last as long as memory itself. It called to us to play the men, and it won from rebellious stricken hearts and from anxious and halting consciences the willing confession at last, "And the Lord do that which seemeth Him good." It asked us not to fall behind Leonard's standard, and some of us have tried; and the dear lad himself, living as he did for the good of others, would have been content, nay even happy to lay down his life, assured that his death would be the means of bringing others nearer to God and more bravely to realisation of duty. And now we have come here once more to consecrate the memorial which his parents have placed within this sanctuary, so near to the scene of his priceless home training, so sacred to him as his own religious home and so revered by him as the centre of his father's influence. His memorial is placed in the religious centre of that district to which his noble and

unselfish impulses turned when, untempted by the career opened up by his brilliant successes, he returned to Stepney, as his father's son, to live for the Jewish youth of that district. His object was to influence them that, as Jews, they should grow up to be true to their religious heritage, and that, as Englishmen, they should help to elevate the manhood of this great country. There was only one example he could set them when the call came for the manhood of England to stand up for it in the ranks of death. We do not grudge England the gift of Leonard Stern's life, but we do know that his loss is more than that of an able soldier to the Army, it is the loss of a noble son of Israel to his own Communion and the loss of a splendid Englishman to the country which cannot spare men like him. One memorial has been placed here by his parents,—the truest memorial will ever be the answer to the call "carry on" in the work he loved and in the kind of life he lived. This memorial has been unveiled by the distinguished Headmaster of the great school where Leonard's mind was so carefully trained and where his heart was kept so pure. He loved University College School and was as proud of it as it was proud of him. On May 1st of last year, only a few days before he fell, he wrote of the school in the following words, "I hope most

earnestly that the old place will flourish, and that lives spent in its service will bear their harvest for the institution." These words have a touching significance, at this moment, for the Headmaster, who is on the point of relinquishing his post at the school for the development and elevation of which he has done so much. It is no little achievement to have produced boys and to have trained men like Leonard Stern. These are the results for which a great teacher works. These are the things by which he measures his life's accomplishment. I know him well enough to be aware that he has loved his work too deeply to leave it without many a pang, but his teaching comes back to us in the final words of his pupil, "Lives spent in its service will bear their harvest for the institution." It has been a real life, it has been a great service, the harvest will be the exalted manhood that will be eternally grateful to the influence that moulded it.

My own privileged part in to-day's ceremony is due to Leonard's having been a pupil at the Religion Classes of the Hampstead Synagogue. It was there that I learned to love an attractive child whose enquiring soul, unknown to him, but very really, uplifted the teacher who responded

to him. A teacher's life is not entirely absorbed by the constant imparting of knowledge from the pedestal of an assured didactic position. There comes a happy moment in the experience of a teacher when instead of awarding prizes, he takes his own reward. It is the moment when he learns from his own pupil. It is the moment when he finds out that the boy has become the man whom the teacher can respect. Such a pupil was Leonard Stern, and his memorial is carried in my heart through the Class Rooms of the Hampstead Synagogue.

And even as a teacher learns from such pupils, so do parents learn from such children. He wrote to his father, "Should anything happen to me I think you ought to try and realise on how many thousands a similar blow has fallen." His outlook was never selfish but always humane and broad, and that is all the more reason why we cannot pay to him any tribute that he would have approved without taking note of the others with whom his happy life was associated, who served the country at his side, and who, like him, have given their lives in the spirit that asks "Who dies if England lives?"

He would wish us to think also of the others of the Cambridge University Congregation who have fallen, Herbert Davis, George Cohen, Harold Spielmann, Walter Woolf, and of Benjamin Polack, one of his best friends who resembled him so closely in character and outlook. Selim Bernstein was his fellow worshipper here and his fellow hero in the great sacrifice. Edgar Samuel shared his work for the boys of the East End and will share his place in their tender recollection. Nor are we, in this or any Synagogue, unmindful of the great Church of England's need and this great common religion of "an Englishman's duty." We are therefore proud to think, in this Stepney Synagogue, of Corporal Alfred Drake, V.C., the Stepney boy who gave his life to save his officer, and we share the pride which is felt in this Borough in Harold Martin Clarke, whose father's work for the benefit of this great and exacting part of the Metropolis is so well known and appreciated and which goes bravely on as a good man's work must, with thought of the others, all the time. As our Jewish boys stand in the ranks with their Christian fellow soldiers, so do we stand shoulder to shoulder with our Christian fellow countrymen in their feelings, in their hopes, and in their griefs and in their anxieties. We Jews have never felt otherwise. The War has discovered to the uninformed exactly

what we are to England and what England is to us, but we have felt this always and one of our greatest of griefs has been that it has not always been understood. We should like our Christian friends to realise that not only are some of the best that we have dying for England but that our best has always been living for England. We ask no undue recognition of what our sons are doing or of the sacrifices that we are making. All we ask for is that there shall be no surprise. Prejudice and misunderstanding are neither Christian nor English, they are unknown to the statute book of this great country, they are alien to the principles of the Christian faith. Men with Leonard Stern's possibilities are not the true Englishmen that he was if they are not such true Jews as he also was.

Loyalty is loyalty, and extends to all things when it is real, and there is no Englishman more loyal to England than the Jew who is proud to be an Englishman and proud to be a Jew.

The members of this Synagogue have founded a Memorial which will take the form of the gift of a prayer-book bearing Leonard Stern's name to each boy in the congregation who attains his Confirmation. Let our Christian friends be assured

that as long as that gift endures, side by side with the principles of the faith within its covers, there will be placed the national duty as inseparable from Jewish teaching.

Finally I would say a word upon that which is in my mind all this time and which is never absent from my heart, and that is the 13th Battalion of the London Regiment, the glorious Kensingtons, to whom Leonard Stern was so proud to belong. It has always been a fine regiment. The spirit which from the outbreak of the War has permeated it has been not of those anxious for bloodshed but of those prepared to stand up for the right, believing in England's cause and prepared for Englishmen's duty. The 1st Battalion, in which Leonard Stern fell, has already inscribed its name immortally on the honour roll of the British Army. The 2nd Battalion, in which Leonard was trained, and which is represented here to day in his honour, is on the point of leaving for the Front. There is no need to say either to the Regiment or its representative "Be of good courage and play the men for our people" for I know that they will do it. We stimulate the courage of their hearts by the courage of our own. We say "Let the Lord do that which seemeth Him good," and though we

pray that God's protecting hand may be over them, we will do our best to remind ourselves ever that honour is more than life, that the common weal is above the individual, and that whatever fate, at its cruellest, can take out of life, our trust in God will always remain.



